

# The Romance of Some Rich Mining Strikes

(By John L. Cowan.)

Nowhere else does the same fortune reveal her false and fickle nature as brazenly as in the mines. To the prospector and miner her smile means all that the heart of man can desire: her frown means disappointment, despair, perhaps death. Yet she smiles and frowns with frivolous disregard of the deserts of those who woo her. Sometimes she seems a grim, sardonic joker, making quips and jests of the lives and hopes of men; sometimes the laughter she sends spirals are unrevealed by even grave-yard humor; and sometimes, though not often, she plays the leading woman in a comedy so bright and cheerful that the whole world joins in the laugh. Yet, trumpet though she is, she never lacks ardent suitors, willing to frown and sue for her favor, even though she leads them through fire, blood, famine, and dishonor into the very jaws of death.

**The Comstock Discovery.**  
With the possible exception of Marshall's lucky find in the race of Sutter's mill, which started the rush of the forty-niners to California, the most famous of American gold discoveries was that of the Comstock lode. Yet years before Comstock ever saw Nevada, the pan, the cradle, the long tom and the sluice box had extracted tens of millions from the sands of the Washoe placers, composed of crumbs that had dropped from the table of Dives spread at the foot of Mount Davidson. Every miner in the Washoe district experienced the same difficulty, due to a heavy, bluish clay away with the lighter sand and gravel. No one knew what it was; but they felt sure it wasn't gold, and gold was the only thing they wanted. Probably it caused more profanity than any thing else ever found in a mining camp. Yet it was sulphur of silver, worth more than six thousand dollars to the ton, one-third in gold and the rest in silver; and every miner in the Washoe district ignorantly threw away four times the wealth that his misdirected labor yielded.

Then Grosh brothers came upon the scene. They hailed from Maine, where people are born asking questions. They didn't know what the black stuff was, either, and of all the tens of thousands of seasoned sourdoughs and unseasoned tenderfeet, these two young men from Maine were the only ones who knew what they were doing. They located the great mother lode, that was destined to set the financial world agog, discovered the world's monetary system, created scores of multimillionaires, and instigated the "crime of '76." One of them started for California to enlist the aid of capitalists. The other stayed to watch the mine. Then the Idaho mine played them a scurvy trick. The first froze to death in the icy passes of the Sierras. The other drove a rusty junk into his foot and died of blood poisoning.

Next came Pat McLaughlin and Pete O'Riley. With the proverbial luck of fools and tenderfeet, they struck a phenomenal streak of pay dirt that lay like a golden blanket over the spot in which the main shaft of the Virginia mine was destined to be driven. As they busied themselves washing out the precious particles, blind luck drove Henry Comstock into the mine. He was a lunk, cadaverous, untutored and unwashed Canadian. Possessed of neither honor, brains, industry, he was yet armed with nerve so monumental that it overtopped the highest peak of the Sierras. Seeing the glint of color in the rock, he dismounted from his pony and coolly informed the workers that they were trespassing upon his farm, and using water from his stream, because, forsooth, he owned all the land thereabouts by right of agricultural location. Of course, this was pure fiction, but the bluff was not called. The ever-anxious discoverer promptly donated him a two-thirds interest in the greatest mineral discovery ever made in America.

**Reward for His Nerve.**  
Comstock's incomparable nerve thus gave his name to the famous mother lode of Nevada, and James Finney, a harmless but worthless drunkard, known in the camp as Old Virginia, bestowed his sobriquet upon one of the famous Big Bonanza mines, as well as upon the city that sprung into existence. These two and the pair whom Comstock had hoodwinked fared little better than the Grosh brothers. Finney drank himself into the grave. Comstock went crazy and committed suicide; O'Riley died in an asylum; and McLaughlin did odd jobs in the camp for awhile, and then drifted out to California, where he died in the poorhouse.

Less gruesome has been the fate of later Nevada gold seekers, of whom one of the most renowned is George Humphrey, the locator of the discovery claim at Manhattan. He was a cow puncher and later a rancher of Reno. Two years ago he was seized by a bad attack of the gold fever, and hastened to Tonopah for treatment. During the last week of March, 1905, he indulged in the not unaccustomed luxury of a glorious spree. On the first of April he recovered consciousness and sanity, and started for Belmont, some sixty miles to the north, to visit his father and brothers, taking a quart bottle of "miners' joy" for companionship on the way. The day was hot, the road dusty, and his throat dry. Naturally he toyed with the bottle; and when noon came it was empty; and he was sleepy. So he dismounted, picked his broncho, and lay down in the shade of a tree on the wayside to rest. The rays of the sun fell slant across the summit of the Powers when he awoke, and he made haste to resume his journey. By the merest chance, his eye fell upon a piece of rock that his boot heel had dislodged during his slumber. Picking it up from force of habit, he examined it closely. He could see no signs of value, but it seemed to him that it looked exactly like the rich ore of Goldfield and Tonopah. So he poked it in his pocket and hastened on his way. He gave the piece of rock no further thought for about three months, when he handed it to an assayer. Imagine his surprise when told that it carried more than one thousand dollars in gold to the ton.

He and his brothers lost no time in hurrying back to the scene of his discovery, where they experienced no difficulty in finding the ledge from which the rock fragment had been broken. It had been passed by thousands of miners, cow boys and ranchers, prospectors, tenderfeet and soldiers of fortune; but no one had thought it worth looking into. There they staked their first claim, naming it the April Pool, in commemoration of the day of the discovery. Then they went to work, sacking ore from the cactus roots down. The first carload shipped averaged eight hundred dollars the ton; and the Manhattan boom was on. The camp now has a population of nine thousand and everyone of the Humphreys is a millionaire. That was probably the most profitable spree recorded in the whole history of the world.

Nearly everyone has heard of Diamondfield, another of the new bonanza camps of Southern Nevada; but not everyone knows that it was discovered by Diamondfield Jack, who was convicted of murder in Idaho. Through the disinterested efforts of a lawyer who believed him innocent of that particular crime, in spite of an exceedingly unsavory record, he was pardoned. The lawyer wanted to get him out of Idaho, so he grub staked him to a burro and a month's rations, and sent him forth much as one might throw a stray dog a bone, put it on the head, and turn it loose to starve. Jack started across the gray desert, neither knowing nor caring where he landed. One morning, when his food was running low, he decided that if he found nothing that day he would turn back. At noon he stopped to do a little prospecting in a place that looked favorable. On that spot the camp of Diamondfield now stands, and the ex-convict counts his wealth in seven figures. For the confusion of cynics, let it be recorded that he rewarded his lawyer friend so munificently that he is now counted a rich man in his community.

**Prospecting Burro.**  
Most famous of the mines of Idaho is the Bunker Hill and Sullivan. Like the story of Manhattan, the tale of its discovery carries no moral that would bear recital before a Sunday school class. N. S. Kellogg was a prospector who had been grub staked by Ed Cooper and O. O. Peck, of Spokane. Cooper and Peck went into Peck's office with specimens of ore, which he had secured near the site of the present town of Wardner, Idaho. Peck pronounced the ore worthless, and declared the grub stake partnership dissolved. Soon afterward, Kellogg fell in with Phil O'Rourke, of Denver, who thought the ore was good, and joined the prospector in a second expedition, grub staked by Harry Baer and Jacob Goetz, of Spokane.

The pair soon chanced upon a burro, which belonged to Peck. It was not much of a burro, even as burros go. It would have been dear at \$3, and Peck had turned it loose to forage for itself. It was pressed into service to carry the grub and outfit, and did duty for thirty days. The Bunker Hill and Sullivan properties were located, and it was not long until they were demonstrated to cover one of the greatest ore bodies in America; by far the greatest that has ever been found in the Coeur d'Alene region. Kellogg was the discoverer, and he brought suit for a share. The case was fought through all the courts of Idaho, attracting wide spread attention and inspiring new jokes by the hundred. It was brought to an end by a Solomonian opinion delivered by Judge Norman H. Buck, of the State Supreme court, of which this is an excerpt:

"This court is of the opinion that the Bunker Hill mine was discovered by Peck's jackass, Phil O'Rourke and N. S. Kellogg. As plaintiff owns the jackass, he is entitled to a one-third interest in the Bunker Hill claim and a one-fourth interest in the Sullivan claim." The properties in litigation were then valued at fifteen million dollars; and the decision of the Supreme Court gave Peck clear title to interests which he realized more than four and a quarter million dollars. At the time of his death, last July, he was counted one of the richest citizens of Spokane.

Within the last few weeks, Leadville had been the scene of greater activity than at any time since the repeal of the Sherman law in 1882. The rise in the price of silver has created a new demand for the carbonate ores that made the camp famous. Scores of old mines are being reopened, and new discoveries have been reported in many places in the vicinity that would have been sensational were it not for the overshadowing interest of the new districts of Southern Nevada. As a consequence, every chance meeting of old time Colorado mining men calls for an exchange of Leadville reminiscences.

**Finding California Gulch.**  
The first strike in the district dates back to the "Pike's Peak or bust" slogan, when the whole empire within a radius of two hundred miles of the Peak was known as the Pike's Peak region. Two parties happened to strike Twin Lakes at the same time. The Stevens party of seven men, and the Johnston party of four men. They all cached their flour and provisions and then separated. Each party agreed to notify the other by a pistol shot in case they struck it. The Johnston party entered what is now called Iowa Gulch, and the Stevens crowd tried their luck in another party to the left. For a time neither party had any success. The Stevens crowd became hungry, and a man named Blatter started for the camp. In his absence, Abe Lee began to pan some worthless looking dirt to kill time, and one of his companions derisively called out:

"Well, what have you got?"  
"I've got California right here in my pan!" he answered.  
His companions ran up to be shown, and found that he had made a phenomenal strike. The pistol shot signal brought the other party to the spot, claims were staked, and a new mining district was born. It was named California Gulch, in honor of Abe Lee's remark; and in sixty days contained forty thousand people. Like the miners of Washoe, those of California Gulch were worried almost to insanity by a heavy sand that clogged their sluice boxes. It was alive, but they did not know it. In ten years they cleaned up twenty-five million dollars in gold, and three

away probably one hundred and twenty-five million dollars in that worth-less black sand. The placers were finally exhausted and the camps of California Gulch were all deserted, excepting four or five log cabins that never became tenanted. In 1876, the first ton of carbonate ore was hauled by oxen to St. Louis; and the year following three hundred tons made the long journey across the mountains and plains. Then smelters were built at Leadville, and the greatest carbonate ore in the world's history was fairly launched upon its remarkable career.

In 1866, a shallow prospect hole on Mount Pisgah, Teller county, Colorado, was salted, and an attempt made to unload it on a bunch of tenderfeet from New York and Pittsburgh. It didn't work. If it had, the tenderfeet would have had wealth thrust upon them, for that salted prospect hole is now the mine shaft of one of the biggest producers of the well known Cripple Creek district. Forty years ago Levi Welty squatted on the land where Cripple Creek now stands, and for a quarter of a century the site of the famous gold camp was a cow pasture. Welty was bought out by the Womach family, who perfected the title, but who sold out to others about 1880 to 1889. However, Bob Womach, known as Lucky Bob, had taken up a tract in Regula Gulch, where he continued in the cattle business, putting in his spare moments, when not riding the range, prospecting. He was a typical cowpuncher, riding like a centaur and drinking "Tao's lightning" by the gallon. Finally he built himself a cabin in Poverty Gulch, and dug a prospect hole on what is now known as the El Paso lode of the Gold King mine. He liked the looks of it, and went to Colorado Springs, where he succeeded in inducing Dr. J. P. Grannis to go and see what he thought of it.

Not many days later, five men wandered into Poverty Gulch. They looked at the holes the others were digging; said the place was no good; and started for other fields. They had gone only a short distance when one of their burros suddenly became lame; so they decided to go into camp until the beast got better. One of the men went to the creek and began panning dirt. He didn't get much color; but it doesn't take much to encourage a prospector, so the party decided to remain. Then they set to work to build a cabin. During its construction, one of the men fell from the roof, alighting on a dog, and breaking his own arm and the dog's leg. Counting the burro, that made three cripples in the budding camp. So it was named Cripple Creek.

It became the fashion for Colorado Springs and Manitou people to go out to Cripple Creek and stake a claim. One who went because everybody else was going was Winfield Scott Stratton. Not having three dollars and fifty cents for thirty days, he walked off with a claim that suited him, although practical miners said it was no good. He was a carpenter by trade, a tramp by occupation, and a drunkard by choice. So his shaft advanced slowly. One day he went to Senator Wolcott, told him he had a good prospect but no money, and offered to deed an undivided one-half and to spend every cent of the money in developing the claim. The Senator was a practical mining man, and regarded Stratton's independence mine as a huge joke. "My dear fellow," he said, "I'm sorry for you, but I wouldn't give three cents for the whole thing."

Stratton worked a little, and held to his claim. Finally his landlady turned him out, because he had never paid her a cent. But for the good nature of two Irishmen who took him in and shared their canned food with him, it is hard to guess what would have become of him.

At last, pay dirt was struck in the independence, the ore running all the way from five thousand to thirty-eight thousand dollars a ton. In two weeks more a train load of ore was shipped to Denver smelters, for which Stratton received four hundred and eighty thousand dollars. Beside of another month he refused an offer of eight million dollars from an English syndicate. Five years later, after taking millions from his mine, he sold out for ten million dollars.

**Knows Another Bonanza.**  
About the only person who got in before the wild days of the Cripple Creek boom started, who failed to reap a fortune, was Lucky Bob Womach, the real discoverer of the camp. He is poorer today than he was when he punched cows in Poverty Gulch; but he says he knows where there is a second Cripple Creek, and that he is going to make sure that he is in right before divulging the secret.

Not many months before the discovery of Cripple Creek, N. C. Creede began prospecting in the King Solomon district, in company with G. L. Smith, of Salida. They found a chunk of loose dirt that looked good to them; but instead of looking for the ledge from which the float had been broken, they began to dig on the spot where it lay. It would be just as logical to dig for diamonds in a street corner where one happened to pick up a diamond ring. However, they had not dug very deep when Creede saw something at the bottom that caused him to ejaculate: "Holy Moses!"—and the Holy Moses mine was discovered, for which a few months later two and a half million dollars was refused.

The first rush of fortune seekers to the new mining camp of Creede gave the district a black eye. No other important discoveries were made, and it seemed as though the Holy Moses mine was all the camp would ever have. Then a burro came to the rescue.

Theodore Henninger and Julius Haas began prospecting around in the vicinity of the discredited camp, with the assistance of three burros. The animals broke loose and ran a distance of three miles. They halted on Bachelor Mountain, where Henninger overtook them. The exasperated prospector sat down in utter weariness. Then his attention was diverted to the rock upon which he was seated, and he chipped off a piece. He could hardly trust the evidence of his eyes, and hurried back to hunt up Jim Creede. Creede examined the rock, and then brought Henninger to hurry up and define his claim, so that he might locate one adjoining it. Henninger's mine was dubbed the Last Chance, and before the slump in sil-

ver it had paid millions in dividends if the price holds at present level, it will pay millions more.

Up the Canyon, down the Canyon, help J. E. T. get the franchise. (Adv.)

## MEASLES EPIDEMIC ABOARD

Births, However, Nearly Equal Deaths on Voyage.

HONOLULU, April 27.—The steamer Heliopolis arrived from Manila, with 2200 Spanish immigrants. During the voyage there were 14 births and nineteen deaths. All the children who died had measles.

Up the Canyon, down the Canyon, help J. E. T. get the franchise. (Adv.)

## CLAIMS KING IS INSULTED

American Woman Seeks Dismissal of Swedish Minister.

NEW YORK, April 27.—Mrs. Ida von Claussen, who recently went to Washington and attempted to see Roosevelt to secure the removal of United States Minister Graves because that official refused to present her to King Oscar of Sweden, tonight gave out the text of a letter which she says had been sent to the Swedish prime minister. In the letter she demands that Graves be expelled from Sweden because of what she says are insults to the King.

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